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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DJIBOUTI 001393

SIPDIS
DEPARTMENT FOR AF AND AF/E

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [EAID](#) [DJ](#) [ER](#) [SO](#)
SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI: DAS WYCOFF DISCUSSES ERITREA, SOMALIA, AND
DJIBOUTI POLITICS WITH PRIME MINISTER

REF: 09 DJIBOUTI 1191

CLASSIFIED BY: J. Swan, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY. During a December 9 courtesy call, visiting AF DAS Karl Wycoff and Ambassador discussed the strong U.S.-Djibouti relationship, Eritrea's regional spoiler role, and the opening of political space in Djibouti with Prime Minister Dileita Mohamed Dileita. Dileita and DAS Wycoff both highlighted the range of bilateral cooperation, emphasizing U.S.-Djibouti partnership on both development and security issues. DAS Wycoff expressed strong USG support for a tough U.N. sanctions resolution on Eritrea, while Dileita criticized third countries-notably Qatar and Libya-for unhelpfully encouraging Eritrea in its spoiler role. On domestic issues, Dileita said that the GODJ welcomed talk of a possible new opposition candidate for 2011 presidential elections, and said that the GODJ was discussing ways to allow opposition parties access to state-run media, even prior to the campaign period. END SUMMARY.

STRONG PARTNERSHIP ON SECURITY, DEVELOPMENT

12. (C) DAS Wycoff told Dileita that he had come to Djibouti both to highlight the strong U.S.-Djibouti bilateral partnership, and to listen to other U.S. partners in the Horn of Africa at the December 7-8 Djibouti-hosted Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) ministerial meeting. Dileita emphasized that Djibouti's "very amicable" relationship with the U.S. was based not just on security issues or the presence of U.S. forces at Djibouti's Camp Lemmonier, but also on substantial development cooperation. The GODJ, he underlined, appreciated current close consultations, and would continue working with the USG on a variety of issues.

ERITREA AND ERITREA IN SOMALIA

13. (C) Dileita told DAS Wycoff that Djibouti-in addition to occupying a key "geostrategic" position on the map- also continued to play an important role in hosting discussions on regional peace and security, such as through the Djibouti Process. DAS Wycoff

said that the U.S. remained very concerned over Eritrea's "unhelpful" regional role, including its support for al-Shabaab in Somalia and its incursion across the border with Djibouti. DAS Wycoff assured Dileita that senior U.S. officials-including Ambassador Rice and A/S Carson-were closely following and supporting the draft UNSC resolution on sanctions against Eritrea. The U.S. firmly agreed with Djibouti's position that the resolution needed to address both Eritrea's interference in Somalia, and Eritrean behavior vis-a-vis the border dispute with Djibouti.

14. (C) Dileita agreed with DAS Wycoff that although a UNSC resolution would not immediately solve the region's Eritrea-related problems, it was nevertheless important to pass a resolution that could serve as a foundation for further action. Prime Minister Dileita said Isaias' recent attempts to block the resolution were further proof that Isaias would feel its impact, and therefore, that it was important and worthwhile to pass it. Isaias' message to the international community is clear, Dileita said: if the international community wants me to solve the Djibouti problem, the international community has to force Ethiopia to address border issues with Eritrea. Before the Djibouti-Eritrea border dispute, Dileita told DAS Wycoff and Ambassador, Djibouti had previously been one of the only countries in the region with a good relationship with Asmara. Eritrea was clearly using Djibouti to link that border dispute to the question of Badme, he said.

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15. (C) Unlike Djibouti, Kenya, or Ethiopia, Dileita said, Eritrea did not share linguistic, cultural, or ethnic heritage with Somalia; Eritrean interference in Somalia amounted to a proxy war. The war in Somalia, Dileita told DAS Wycoff, had before always been about tribes, clans, and factions-but now it had become a "jihad" with people from outside of Somalia trying to impose an Islamic state. As Eritrea itself does not have the means to interfere in Somalia, Dileita said, there must be other countries "pushing" and funding Eritrean involvement, such as Qatar and Libya. Dileita criticized such actors' "political games," which had the effect of destabilizing "poor countries like Djibouti."

GOOD GOVERNANCE AT HOME: WELCOMING

ADDITIONAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES?

16. (C) DAS Wycoff said that the Obama administration continued to emphasize the primacy of working with our partners on issues of good governance, democracy, and transparency. A primary U.S. objective in the Horn of Africa, DAS Wycoff stressed, is the stability of the region. Counterterrorism, he explained, is linked to the greater goal of stability, and supports it. DAS Wycoff told Dileita that in tandem with the USG's "very important" concern for ongoing stability in Djibouti, the U.S. was ready to accompany the GODJ's own efforts to develop socially and economically, for example by creating "space for opposition."

17. (C) Dileita said that he appreciated the Ambassador's significant efforts to facilitate dialogue on issues of good governance, democracy, and transparency in Djibouti. He praised a recent Embassy event (reftel) which "for the first time" brought together members of ruling coalition and opposition parties to participate in a seminar on proportional representation. "I support these initiatives," Dileita said, because they prevent democracy from "stagnating." He said that he had discussed with President Guellih the idea of allowing opposition parties access to state-run media, even prior to the campaign period, during which

such access is legally required, and that the GODJ planned to "go in this direction." He also said that he had not been opposed to the recent publication of a newsletter by a ruling coalition partner party, and would be open to other parties establishing newspapers. (NOTE. The PND (National Democratic Party), a member of President Guelleh's five-party ruling coalition, published an eight-page "Party Congress Special Edition" of their periodic newsletter "The Republic" on November 26. Inter alia, the newsletter announced that the PND party congress, to be held December 13, would feature discussions of the party's position on a possible constitutional amendment to allow President Guelleh to run for a third term in 2011, as well as a determination of whether to present PND President Aden Robleh Awaleh as a candidate. END NOTE.) Dileita said that the GODJ was "encouraging" the possible PND candidacy, and would welcome other presidential candidates.

COMMENT

18. (C) The stalemated Eritrea-Djibouti border dispute remains a central GODJ priority, and as Djiboutian leadership becomes increasingly frustrated with continued Eritrean intransigence, U.S. efforts to support Djibouti in the UNSC are recognized and appreciated. Domestically, Djibouti's recent history of opposition election boycotts and single-candidate races likely informs the ruling party's thinking on the desirability of additional

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candidates for presidential elections in 2011. While President Guelleh's supporters are widely expected to request a constitutional amendment allowing him to run for a third term in office, key players-including the Prime Minister and the President himself-may be inclined to see additional candidates, and especially additional candidates from historically relatively loyal coalition partners, as potential contributors to the overall legitimacy of 2011 elections. END COMMENT.

19. (U) DAS Wycoff cleared this cable.
SWAN